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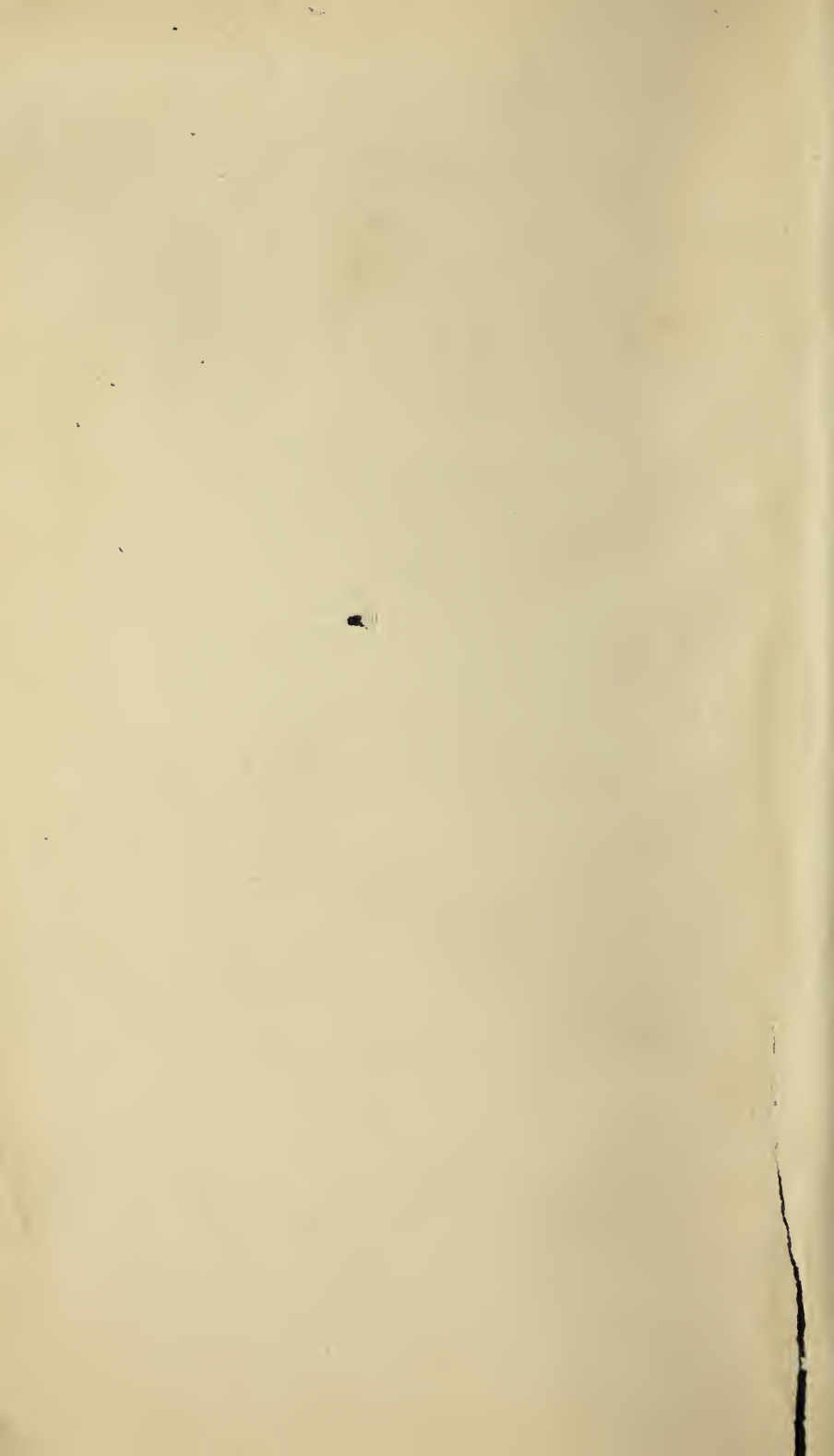
BUTT, ISAAC
REPEAL OF THE UNION



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MR. BUTT'S SPEECH

ON

REPEAL OF THE UNION.



James Mc Gashon
from his friend
Isaac Butt

REPEAL OF THE UNION:

THE SUBSTANCE OF

A SPEECH

DELIVERED IN

THE CORPORATION OF DUBLIN,

ON THE 28TH FEBRUARY, 1843,

ON

MR. O'CONNELL'S MOTION

TO PETITION FOR

A REPEAL OF THE LEGISLATIVE UNION.

BY

ISAAC BUTT, ESQ.

ALDERMAN OF ST. GEORGE'S WARD.

DUBLIN

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S P E E C H.

ON Tuesday, the 28th of February, 1843, Mr. O'Connell concluded a speech which occupied upwards of four hours in the delivery, by moving

“That a petition from the Corporation of the City of Dublin be presented to parliament, praying for a repeal of the legislative union.”

Mr. M'Loughlin having seconded the motion, it was put from the chair.

Mr. Butt then rose to address the assembly.

I rise, my lord mayor, to move an amendment to the resolution which you have just put—an amendment, the pith and substance of which is, that the decision, I cannot now say the discussion, of this question be adjourned *sine die*. Before I mention more particularly the terms of the amendment, I will very briefly state the view I take of this question, and the course which upon this occasion it is my intention to pursue.

I do not mean by this amendment to shrink from the discussion of the question of repeal. However I and my friends near me may regret the introduction of this question into this assembly, we all feel that it is impossible now to avoid its discussion; perhaps it was so after the notice given by the honourable and learned gentleman; it certainly is so after his speech—a speech of the tone and temper of which I am bound to say, I, and those who agree with

me in opinion, have not the slightest reason to complain. This is the first time, I may be permitted to say, that ever the question of repeal has been submitted to an assembly of Irishmen, in which both parties have a right to be heard in calm and deliberative discussion. This is the first occasion upon which it has, in Ireland, been submitted to the test of argument and reason; and we who believe that we best consult the interests of our country by maintaining inviolate her union with Great Britain, would desert our duty no less to those who hold opposite opinions, than to ourselves, if upon this occasion we refused to give our reasons for the conviction we entertain.

But still, my lord, I feel that whatever may be the abstract merits of the question itself, there are strong objections to its introduction here; that independently of any of the opinions we may entertain on the subject of repeal, there are strong arguments against its agitation in this assembly—still more so, against committing the character of this municipal body to a project so wild and visionary. By the adoption of such a course, it is impossible to deny that we will in a great measure, if not altogether, unfit ourselves for the discharge of those duties to our fellow-citizens, which are beyond all question the first object of our existence, and ought to be the first of our solicitude.

I was, I confess, exceedingly surprised when I read the notice placed in our paper by the honourable and learned gentleman, but not more so, I am sure, than many who will perhaps vote with him to-day. I am quite confident that there are many who agree with him in his desire to repeal the union between the countries, who yet agree with me in thinking that the agitation of the question in an assembly such as this, is calculated to do great and

irreparable mischief to this corporation and to the country. I had certainly understood it to be the anxious desire of all parties to exclude from this place discussions of such a character. I do not say that there was any express compact to this effect. On the contrary, I distinctly say, that I do not impute to the honourable and learned gentleman the slightest breach of faith. But this I do say, without fear of contradiction, that for so far we have all been acting on the tacit understanding that we would avoid those topics of excitement which unfortunately distract our country : this understanding, I admit, rested solely on the good sense and good feeling of this assembly, but on these I, for one, did rely for its continuance.

This, my lord, is the first time that a political discussion has been introduced here ; and of all political questions this is the one, the agitation of which is most likely to be mischievous. Against this first attempt to convert this municipal body into a theatre of political and partizan agitation—in the name of common sense—in the name of our fellow-citizens whose trustees we are—in the name of our common country, I enter my decided protest. And I do put it to those who are the most ardent supporters of repeal, whether their cool and calm judgment must not tell them that, in the effects that must follow the adoption of such a resolution as that proposed—in committing this corporation to the cause of repeal—in the dissensions which political agitation must introduce within these walls—in the impression which it will produce without them—in the position of hostility in which we will be placed by the adoption of such a resolution, not only to the government, to the united parliament, and the entire British people, but also to that great and influential portion of the Irish public who are resolutely

determined to maintain the union between the countries—I say I put it to the good sense of every repealer in this room, whether there must not be by this an injury inflicted on the peace, the character, the utility, and the influence of this corporation—an injury infinitely more than sufficient to counterbalance any possible advantage that can arise to the cause of repeal from the affirmation of the resolution before you.

On these grounds, my lord, I feel that the motion of the honourable and learned gentleman can and ought to be resisted, without deciding the abstract question of the expediency of repeal. In accordance with these views, I think it necessary, in the first instance, to take the sense of the assembly upon the question whether we are willing to have this assembly converted into a place of political agitation? It is one question whether, abstractedly, you think the union ought to be repealed; it is quite another whether you think this corporation should be committed to the agitation of that repeal. I therefore feel it my duty to move the following amendment:—

“That believing the agitation of the question of repeal of the legislative union between England and Ireland, in the corporation of the city of Dublin, is calculated to produce political dissensions, prevent all cordial co-operation between persons of different political opinions, and to prevent this body from usefully exercising its municipal functions for the good of the citizens at large, this assembly deprecates, in the strongest manner, the introduction of the question; and that, therefore, the consideration of the question be adjourned *sine die*.”

Should this amendment unfortunately be negatived, unfortunately for the character and influence of this assembly—unfortunately for the city we represent—unfortunately for our country—nothing then will remain but for me and those who agree with me to place distinctly

on record our sentiments relative to repeal ; and with those who negative the amendment must rest the responsibility of the course.

And I must be permitted to say, that there is not the slightest inconsistency between the amendment I now move and the challenge to which the honourable and learned gentleman has alluded. At the very moment I threw out that challenge, I stated the precise terms of the amendment I now propose. I cautiously guarded myself against being misunderstood. I explained—if you will, qualified that challenge ; I deprecated the introduction of the question here, but I said if you bring on the question at all, bring it on on a day when it will be possible for me to meet you ; not on a day on which I will be of necessity absent from my place. Does this deprive me now of the argument that whatever opinion we may entertain as individuals, we ought not to commit the character and the fortunes of this municipal body to the question of repeal ?

But I repeat I do not shrink from the full discussion of the question which the honourable and learned gentleman has forced on us. I have not sought that discussion—far from it. I will not avoid it. And, however unequal I may feel myself to meet the honourable and learned gentleman opposite—unequal under any circumstances, much more so when I have been able to devote but a few hours, taken from pressing avocations, to inform myself upon a subject with which the honourable and learned gentleman has been familiar for years ;—yet, in justice to myself, in justice to my constituents, in justice to my country, I meet the question that has been forced on us.

I now come to the question of repeal itself, and, in approaching this question, I have to request all the indul-

gence of this assembly—all that kindness for which I have so frequently been grateful. I feel all the difficulties of my position—addressing, I will not say a hostile, but certainly an unwilling audience. I have to set myself against your cherished prejudices—against your natural, but, permit me to say, your utterly mistaken sentiments of national pride. I appeal not to your passions, or to your excited feelings, I address myself to your reason—to your calm and sober judgment. I know all that I have to encounter, but if I satisfy your judgment that the amendment I propose is one that you ought to adopt, I will confidently submit it to your good sense.

I am quite willing to discuss this question as an Irishman. I am not—I cannot be indifferent to the prosperity of the British empire. I could not contemplate without dismay the breaking up of that mighty dynasty—the downfall of that noble power. Nay, more; I believe with Pitt that no one can speak as a true Englishman who does not speak as a true Irishman, or as a true Irishman who does not speak as a true Englishman. I am satisfied that we have all a much greater stake in the strength and in the prosperity of the empire at large, than we can have in any petty and separate interest of any of its component parts. But I am willing to leave imperial interests out of view—to draw no aid to my argument from the injury that Ireland must evidently sustain from any weakening of the imperial power of Britain. I am willing to discuss the question, as the agitation for a repeal of the union must directly affect the position and the prosperity of Ireland.

There is one remarkable omission in the speech of the honourable and learned gentleman, of which I must say every member in this assembly has some reason to com-

plain. The motion of the honourable and learned gentleman is simply, that we shall petition for the repeal of the union. I will show you that no possible notice can be more indefinite—more unsatisfactory than this ; and the speech of the mover has not supplied this defect. When the honourable and learned gentleman calls on us to commit ourselves to a question so momentous—to take a step so important as that of petitioning for the repeal of the union, surely it is not too much to expect that he will distinctly state what is the object at which he aims, the terms upon which the separation between the legislatures is to be accomplished, and the mode upon which the new constitution of Ireland is to be framed. Not a single hint of such subjects has been given from one end to the other of the honourable and learned gentleman's long address. Yet these are, of all others the topics, which, dealing with the matter as a practical question, we have a right to expect to be distinctly treated and explained ; and I believe that, had they been so, it would be found that a great portion of the honourable and learned gentleman's declamation, that had told so powerfully on the assembly, was utterly inapplicable to his case, and that many of his nine propositions were equally irrelevant.

I do say, my lord, that the speech of the honourable and learned gentleman ought, in the very first instance, distinctly to have apprized us upon these two points—what is to be the state of Ireland in her relation with Britain, and what is to be the internal constitution of Ireland. I believe the total omission to notice either of these subjects is in itself conclusive on the question before us. I will satisfy the assembly that this is not a mere captious or immaterial

objection; that when I call on the honourable and learned gentleman to give us explicit information on these points, this is no mere artifice of debate; and I do implore you on this question, vitally affecting the peace and prosperity of our common country, to give me your earnest attention—to bear with me, however I may oppose your prejudices—to give me a patient hearing, and to weigh well what I urge. It is very plausible, no doubt, to talk about national independence, to prove that Ireland is great enough to be a separate nation. It is easy to excite the enthusiasm of a high-spirited people by calling upon us to rescue our country from a state of provincialism, and restore her to the dignity of a nation; but is it too much to expect, that before we suffer ourselves to be led away by such specious language, we should clearly understand what is the meaning of “national independence?” Every Irishman has a right to call on the honourable and learned gentleman exactly to define the object at which he aims.

The least careful consideration of the past history, and the present position of Ireland, must satisfy every candid mind that these are subjects which it is impossible to overlook in considering the question of repeal.

There is no impression more common, yet none more utterly erroneous, than the belief, that in adopting the views of the honourable and learned gentleman, we are but demanding for Ireland the restoration of something that this country once had. I am quite prepared to demonstrate to this assembly that there cannot be any thing like restoration in the case.

Ours is not the case of an ancient dynasty, to the memorials and traces of which we can point—ours is not the case

of a people with a law and a constitution of our own made subject to another people differing from us in laws, in language, and in origin—ours is not the case of a people like the French Canadians, subject to foreign laws and to foreign jurisprudence, and claiming the restoration of their ancient laws. No! the honourable and learned gentleman has, in this assembly, made no such case, he could make no such case for Ireland. All that we can seek is of English origin. Our common law is the common law of England—the parliament which is claimed is a Saxon institution—the honourable and learned gentleman can trace the liberties of Ireland to no higher source than the English conquest. His claim is for Anglo-Saxon rights. I believe it of importance to mark this. The liberties of Ireland are rested on the English conquest—on the subversion of the ancient laws of the country—on the introduction of the English common law and Saxon rights. I repeat, the honourable and learned gentleman can trace the liberties of our country no higher than the English conquest. No man in his senses indeed would dream of calling for the restoration of the Brehon law, and the old system of the Irish chieftainries. Upon this point we are agreed, that all that we seek is of English origin. The charter of our liberties, the right to our parliament, arose with the English dominion in Ireland. The claim for repeal is now to be put forward by us as the successors, whether by descent or incorporation, of the Anglo-Saxons in Ireland. This is the ground taken to-day by the honourable and learned gentleman—a ground, I must say, not altogether consistent with the usual topics urged by the honourable and learned gentleman—of the injustice and oppression of the Anglo-Saxons towards the native Irish; topics fortunately ex-

cluded from this discussion, and which could not help, but must hurt, the case he has put forward to-day.

It is so essential to this question, to dissipate the delusion of restoration, as connected with repeal, that I trust the assembly will bear with me while I briefly refer to the history of our country, to ascertain to what amount of independence Ireland has in fact at any period of her existence attained. To the period antecedent to the English conquest it is unnecessary to refer. In 1173, the English dominion was established in the eastern portions of the island, whether by the right of conquest, or by a cession of the Irish chieftains, the usual excuse of conquerors, it is now useless to inquire. For centuries the English dominion, the Pale, as it was termed, extended but little beyond the immediate vicinity of Dublin. So late as the reign of Henry VIII., it extended over only four counties. The vigorous reign of Elizabeth added nineteen counties to the Pale; but it was not until the reign of James I., that any thing like a parliamentary constitution was extended to the whole of Ireland. In the intervening time, it was quite true that provincial assemblies had been held—colonial parliaments, or, as they were termed, parliaments of the Pale, without power, without influence; whose time was occupied in passing laws, or more correctly speaking, military ordinances, to prevent the king's subjects of the Pale from amalgamating with the Irish enemies outside: those were the parliaments of the Edwards and the Henrys; mere conventions of the English settlers; irregular in their constitution, in their place, and their time of meeting—without any of the attributes of legislative, or even of deliberative assemblies.

But what was the condition of the parliament of Ireland even after the extension of its constitution in the reign of James I.—the first period at which it could possibly claim the character or dignity of the parliament of the Irish nation? Gentlemen opposite have probably heard of Poynings' law, a subject that has given rise to much discussion. That was not a law of the English parliament—it was a law of the parliament of Ireland itself: it was passed, I believe, in 1495; at all events, it was the 10th of Henry VII.: it was passed while Sir Edward Poyning was Lord Justice, at a parliament held at Drogheda; and its enactments were these—that before any parliament was called in Ireland, the heads of every bill intended to be proposed to that parliament should be sent over to the English privy council, and should be approved of there. This was afterwards modified by an act of Philip and Mary. It was found inconvenient to enforce literally the provisions which obliged the heads of every bill to be sent over before the parliament was convened, and this modification permitted the heads to be sent over while the parliament was actually sitting. But the condition of the parliament of Ireland was this, that they could not entertain, they could not in strictness even discuss any bill until the heads of it were approved of by the English privy council; that was, in fact, by the English attorney-general, the officer, who in practice superintended the Irish bills. This law of Poynings—a law passed by the Irish parliament itself—enacted the dependence of the Irish parliament. It is singular that to this remarkable statute the honourable and learned gentleman has never in the course of his argument adverted. He has to the 6th of George I.: that was a law of the English parliament, affirming or declaring the right of the English parliament to bind Ireland by its

laws—a right, however, not often exercised, and the assertion of which obviously very little affected the question of Irish parliamentary independence so long as the law of Poynings remained in force ; and this law of Poynings, in fact, preceded the establishment of any thing that can be called the parliamentary institutions of Ireland.

Thus stood matters up to 1782. The English parliament having in 1719 entered on their statute-book a right to bind Ireland by laws passed in that parliament—a right always, however, disputed. The Irish parliament from its earliest formation, admittedly without power even to pass a bill that had not previously been sanctioned by the English privy council. Thus stood the question of Ireland's parliamentary independence up to 1782. In 1782 it is quite true the Irish parliament passed their celebrated declaration of right ; the English parliament repealed the act of the 6th of George I., and renounced their claim to make laws for Ireland, and the Irish parliament modified, but did not repeal, the law of Poynings. I beg the attention of the assembly to this, that up to the period of the union, the law of Poynings had never been wholly repealed, and the portion of it which was reserved was made a part of the constitution of 1782—that constitution which I think the honourable and learned gentleman has called a final settlement of the relations between England and Ireland. In that year this degrading law was modified. The modification was brought in by Mr. Yelverton, and consisted in this—that the Irish parliament might originate and pass bills without the previous consent of the English privy council ; but this right was expressly reserved to the English crown, that no bill should become law until it received the assent of the sovereign under the great seal, not of Ireland, but of England.

I must again earnestly request the attention of the assembly to this fact. By the constitution of 1782, which I understood the honourable and learned gentleman to say was the final settlement of Ireland's independence, a bill which might receive the unanimous consent of both the Irish houses of parliament, required the assent of the sovereign, under the great seal, not of Ireland, but of England; a great seal in the custody of the English chancellor alone—a minister responsible to the English parliament, and not to the Irish. In England the sovereign has the power of refusing her assent to any measure passed by both houses of parliament; but she does this under the advice of ministers responsible to that very parliament, by the advice of an English cabinet—this is the practical check upon the exercise of the power. But by the boasted constitution of 1782, the sovereign of Ireland exercised the right of assenting to or rejecting bills passed by the parliament of Ireland—not by the advice of an Irish cabinet—there was no such thing in existence—not by the advice of any minister responsible to, or in any way dependent upon, the Irish parliament, but by the advice of a minister solely responsible to and solely dependent on an English parliament.

This power to the great seal of England was not reserved as a mere speculative monarchical right. Did time now permit, I could read to you extracts from the speeches of the patriots both of 1782 and 1800—from the speeches of those who advocated the declaration of right, and those who opposed the union in both houses of the Irish parliament, proving that they relied on this necessity of having the assent of the crown under the great seal of England to all acts of the Irish parliament, as the security against separation—

as the answer to those who urged the danger of two independent legislatures in one state. It was then relied on as a real and practical control. Let us then not be led astray by any declamation about national honour and national independence. Was this constitution, I ask, national independence? Am I not now entitled to demand of the honourable and learned gentleman, before he calls on us to embark in this scheme of repeal, to state distinctly the terms of the object which he seeks? Does he seek to re-establish this settlement of 1782, or seek something different from and beyond it? Throughout the entire of his address, he has never stated the terms upon which the countries must be united after the separation of the legislatures; and when he comes to reply, I trust he will feel it necessary distinctly to state what is the national independence at which he aims.

I repeat, my lord, when the honourable and learned gentleman calls on us to seek for the re-establishment of Ireland's legislative independence, I do think that he should distinctly have told us what he means by this. Does he mean by this independence, in support of which he has cited so many examples of independent states, in proof of which he has affirmed so many propositions of our fitness to be a nation—does he mean by this national independence, that in the most important prerogative of giving or refusing her assent to our laws, our sovereign is to be guided by the advice of a foreign minister—foreign if your views be right—responsible to a foreign parliament, and influenced by the views of that parliament? Or, does he mean to demand something that he does not openly express—something for which the settlement of 1782 not only furnishes no argument, but

against which it supplies an unanswerable one? These, surely, are subjects upon which we are entitled to the most distinct and explicit information.

But according to the constitution of Ireland from 1782 to 1800, the prerogative of the crown, in assenting to or negating our laws, was not the only one of the prerogatives which was to be exercised exclusively by the advice of ministers who were not Irish. Where will you find your executive if you repeal the union? What had we under the constitution of 1782?—a lord lieutenant appointed, nominated by the English minister, and responsible only to the English cabinet and the English parliament—a chief secretary similarly appointed, and therefore, indirectly under the control of the English parliament? This was the government of Ireland. We must remember this, there never was a constitution in Ireland that gave to the imperial sovereign Irish advisers; and yet, by every constitution of Ireland, she was bound by the acts of the imperial crown. To insist otherwise is to demand that separation which we all agree to be ruin. Whose advice must the sovereign take on all questions of imperial, ay, or even Irish policy? The advice of her English ministers, the only advisers that any constitution of either country has ever yet recognised.

By the constitution of both countries, the sovereign has the exclusive right of making peace and proclaiming war. By whose advice? By the advice of the English minister. I may be told that the Irish parliament might refuse the supplies. So they might. But do you imagine that if a war was popular in England, England would care for our supplies? We could not prevent, by all the efforts of our parliament, this country from being at war—perhaps from being the very theatre of war. This was admitted,

may, insisted upon, by all the opponents of the union in 1800. The sovereign, by the advice of the English ministers, sympathising with the English parliament alone, in which Ireland was wholly unrepresented, had the power of exposing Ireland to all the inconveniences of war. Was this more a state of independence than to send our members to the imperial legislature to exercise our fair proportion of influence upon every imperial question? No man will surely tell me that it is possible for the queen of England to be at war, and the queen of Ireland to be at peace; that while England is at war with France, a French fleet is to ride unmolested in Cork harbour. This would be, in effect, a separation. Let gentlemen answer this; but let them not talk of national independence while they are prepared to place Ireland in this position—that without her own concurrence, direct or indirect, she might be made the theatre of war, exposed to all its horrors; and this in a war of which the whole Irish nation might disapprove; begun by the English minister and sanctioned by the English parliament. This is, indeed, to make Ireland a province.

But is this all? Gentlemen talk of making Ireland a nation by repealing the act of union. Where will be our navies? where our armies? where our ambassadors to foreign states? where will be our colonies? who will appoint the generals, the admirals?—all, all belonging to the English government. This must, indeed, make Ireland a province—without the power of interfering in imperial concerns, yet bound by imperial acts. How much better is it for her to send her representatives to the imperial parliament?—how much greater is her dignity? I can perfectly understand those who seek for separation:

who, unawed by the treason the project implies, are anxious to separate Ireland from the imperial crown; they have a right to dignify their cause by all the arguments drawn from Ireland's fitness to be a nation; but I cannot understand those who talk of national independence, and yet propose to recur to the constitution of 1782. It is very easy to talk of a province and a nation; but if there be one situation on earth of a country to which the word province is strictly applicable, it is to the state of Ireland under this boasted constitution: a nation she might be in name, but without any of the functions or attributes of a nation; without a national executive; no place for her among the nations of the earth; without her fleets or her armies; no colonies; no ambassadors to other countries. Unless we are prepared to go the length of separation, we must be a paltry, pitiful, and subject province of England; our parliament a provincial and colonial assembly. I am quite satisfied that once attain repeal, and separation must follow.—(Cries of no! no!) Well, be it so: but unless you do go this length, you have only reduced Ireland from an integral part of the empire to a province, and thus I answer the arguments and propositions of the honourable and learned gentleman, which affirm the greatness and resources of Ireland. What do these prove? That Ireland is too great to be a province—but a province she must be, under the constitution of 1782—under any constitution you can propose. What then remains?—union or separation!

I have said that by the settlement of 1782 Ireland was but a province. I believe that it was the national indignation at the state in which this country was then placed—the discontent, the sense of national degradation that was

thus created—that first excited the attempt at separation which terminated in the blood-stained rebellion of 1798. We have on record the sentiments and opinions of many of the originators of that attempt. I will read to the assembly the words of one of these—a man mistaken indeed, and dangerous, but one whom I will always regard as a generous and high-minded enthusiast, and one who was as sincerely attached to the honour of his country as any man who ever breathed—I mean Wolfe Tone. So early as 1791, Wolfe Tone had been a member of a club formed for the express purpose of separating Ireland from England, and the extract I now read is from a pamphlet published by him in that year to forward the cause of separation. He thus describes—truly describes—the state of Ireland :—

“ The present state of Ireland is such as is not to be paralleled in history or fable. Inferior to no country in Europe in the gifts of nature—blessed with a temperate sky and a fruitful soil—intersected by many great rivers—indented round her whole coast with the noblest harbours—abounding with all the necessary materials for unlimited commerce—teeming with inexhaustible mines of the most useful metals—filled by four millions of an ingenious and a gallant people, with bold hands and ardent spirits—posted right in the track between Europe and America, within fifty miles of England and three hundred of France: yet with all these great advantages, unheard-of and unknown—without pride, or power, or name—without ambassadors, army, or navy—not of half the consequence in the empire of which she has the honour to make a part with the single county of York, or the loyal and well-regulated town of Birmingham.”

Is this the state to which you would reduce your country? This is the description of her state after nine years' experience of the constitution of 1782. Is it not, I ask you, a just description of the political position of Ireland under that constitution?—“ with all her great advantages, unheard-of and unknown, without pride, or power, or name—without ambassadors, army, or navy?” “With all her

great advantages!" were not the arguments then used by the advocates of separation, just the same as those brought forward to-day? The eloquent eulogium of the honourable and learned gentleman, on the powers, the virtues, and the capabilities of his country, is compressed into the few sentences of Wolfe Tone. But in what position will you place Ireland by repealing the act of union—by recurring to the independence of 1782? "not of half the consequence in the empire of which she has the honour to make a part, with the single county of York, or the loyal and well-regulated town of Birmingham." Unless these arguments are meant for separation they are delusion. It is delusion to talk of national independence, and then propose to reduce our country to be a paltry pitiful province of Britain, without voice, or dignity, or weight in the empire. Unless you go the length of separation, you do nothing.—(Cries of no.) I entreat your calm and deliberate attention. I am endeavouring to prove to you that in considering this question, you must not permit your feelings to be led away by declamation about a national independence that never existed, and which, if it means any thing, must mean separation. I repeat that by the constitution of 1782, the affairs of Ireland were, in her executive, managed by an English minister, and the law of Poynings was modified but not repealed; and the power reserved to the keeper of the English great seal, of advising the sovereign to refuse her assent to their measures, was relied on by the advocates of Irish independence as the security for the connection between the countries. That the queen does possess the power of negating a bill, no constitutional lawyer will or can deny. Suppose, then, the English minister to advise the queen to refuse her assent to an act

passed by both houses of parliament in Ireland ; suppose her minister backed in his advice to exercise this prerogative by the voice of an English parliament and the English nation ; what are you to do ? You cannot impeach the English minister ; you are powerless ; you must virtually acknowledge the supremacy of the English parliament—a parliament to which you cannot send one single representative to advocate your cause—in which you have not one single vote. Do you think that you will tamely submit, or must not there be again union or separation ?

There are some points in the honourable and learned gentleman's speech to which I must refer. I do not intend at this late hour to follow him through the nine propositions he has laid before us, and to many of which it is not material for me to reply. My lord, it is no part of my argument, it is no part of my feeling, to throw any discredit on the ancient Irish parliament. If that parliament had its faults, for the honour of our country let them be forgotten in the splendour of their virtues. That parliament I cannot forget, was exclusively returned by the Protestant section of Ireland—the section it now suits the purpose of the honourable and learned gentleman to stigmatise as anti-national. Why should I throw discredit upon them. God forbid, when I speak this, that I should attempt to throw discredit upon any class of my countrymen. No ! I give them from my heart, full credit for all the virtues that the honourable and learned gentleman has attributed to them ; and it is, because I believe, that by the agitation for repeal, these very virtues will be perverted into crimes, that I do most earnestly oppose that agitation.

But the honourable and learned gentleman has given us a list of the petty states in Europe that are inferior to

Ireland in the elements of strength. Is there, I ask, an Irishman who would wish to see his country reduced to the level of some of these states—existing by sufferance, and depending for its very existence on every caprice or calculation of the great powers of Europe? Some of these states are less than Ireland—so they are than Wales, than Scotland, than Yorkshire, than the province of Ulster, than the county of Cork. What is this but to affirm that one state is greater than another? To argue from this, is to argue that mankind ought to be broken up into the very smallest communities that could possibly exist. But for what is this argument used? If the example of these states proves any thing, it proves that Ireland ought to be, like them, a sovereign and independent state. The constitution of 1782 would not place Ireland on a level with the least of them. The employment of arguments like these I do call delusion.

The honourable and learned gentleman has appealed to our pride, by contrasting us with Canada and Jamaica. Jamaica and Canada have their parliaments! Was there ever such delusion as this? They have parliaments, local and colonial, subject entirely to the control of the imperial legislature. Did not the honourable and learned gentleman himself support the late ministry in a measure carried in the British parliament, by which the constitution of Jamaica was, by a mere act of the British legislature, totally swept away? Has not Canada been similarly dealt with?

Alderman O'Connell—I voted against that.

Mr. Butt—In that instance, then, the honourable and learned gentleman voted right; but this cannot alter my argument. By an act of the British legislature, the

parliament of Canada was abolished ; her constitution suspended ; and, contrary, I believe, to the wishes of both provinces, the two provinces have been united into one. No state of dependence can be more complete ; no provincialism more entire, than the condition of countries unrepresented in the British parliament, yet bound by British statutes. I cannot think the references to Canada and Jamaica were very fortunate instances of national independence, and I believe that Ireland, after all, is a little more independent than either.

As to the progress of Ireland in prosperity from 1782 to 1800, I am not called on to deny it. No one defends the state of things before 1782, when Ireland was legislated for by a parliament in which she was not represented—her trade and her industry unjustly treated. But it must be remembered, that the years thus referred to were years of general prosperity ; and Ireland shared fully in the progress of the empire. It is an admitted fact, that about the commencement of the war, a general stimulus was given to trade ; and at the time of the unexampled increase in the issue of money by the Bank of England at the period of the bank restriction, England rapidly progressed in prosperity.

Mr. O'Connell—The bank restriction was in 1797.

Mr. Butt—The honourable and learned gentleman is quite right in the date ; but he will find that the increase in their issues, which in fact created the necessity for that measure, had been proceeding for many years before. But this is immaterial. All I assert is, that these years were years of general progress, and I admit that Ireland fully shared in the prosperity and progress of the empire. It does not follow, that were we to repeal the union, days

of such progress in the general history of the world would again recur.

But before I deal with this part of the question, I have something to say as to the future constitution of Ireland. I have already adverted to the remarkable omission in the speech of the honourable and learned mover of any statement of the terms of the proposed connection with Britain. I have now to complain of another equally singular and equally important omission. He has not told us what is to be the internal constitution of Ireland after repeal. Now, these are points essential—points of his plan, upon which, before committing ourselves to a vague and indefinite agitation, we have a right to clear, distinct, and explicit information. Gentlemen, I know, do not reflect on all that is or may be contained in the words, repeal of the union. As we have no ancient dynasty, so we have no ancient constitution to fall back upon. You do not mean to return to the state of things in 1799; to restore matters as they then were; to re-enfranchise the old close boroughs of Ireland; to re-charter the old corporations; you cannot now call back the ancient elements of our parliament; your very first step must be to make a constitution. Let us not be deceived by the specious cry of restoration; there can be no such thing as a restoration in the case.

I am I confess, my lord, extremely anxious earnestly to press this part of the subject on the attention of the assembly because, I believe, it is very little understood. On our last day of meeting, when some discussion arose relative to the postponement of this question, a respected friend of mine, if he will permit me to call him so, (Mr. M'Loughlin,) the seconder of the resolution to-day, observed, that

there was nothing so very formidable in the resolution ; that it was simply to repeal an act of parliament, a matter of no uncommon occurrence. Another gentleman opposite (Mr. Staunton) corrected that statement by saying, that in addition to this it would be necessary to re-enact another act of parliament—the settlement of 1782. Now, my lord, I do think I will satisfy both these gentlemen, that whatever be the merits of the question before the assembly, it is one involving subjects much more serious than either of them then seemed to anticipate. I will, I think, convince them, that whether it be right or wrong to give to Ireland a domestic and separate legislature, this must involve something much more difficult, much more momentous, than the mere repeal of an act of parliament, or the restoration of any state of things that has ever yet existed. Your very first step must be to create a new and untried constitution for Ireland. You have, I repeat, no ancient constitution to fall back upon. You do not mean—you cannot mean—to demand the restoration of the political constitution which existed in 1800. You have not one single ancient landmark to abide by. This is avowed. I will prove it to you, that it is avowed by the honourable and learned gentleman opposite—fairly, and openly, and manfully avowed. I hold in my hand a resolution, proposed by the honourable and learned gentleman last year, when he founded the Repeal Association, and declared the principles on which repeal was to be carried. It was thus he opened the repeal movement by a clear and explicit confession of political faith—a definition, in fact, of the term “repeal of the union :”—

Resolved—That the leading practical objects of the loyal National Repeal Association during the current year are declared to be and shall be—

Firstly—The total abolition of the tithe rent-charge subject only to vested interests; but to be totally abrogated from the statute-book as being a badge of the servitude, and a token of the slavery, of the Irish people.

Secondly—To procure that without which there can be no peace in Ireland—fixity of tenure for the occupying tenants of the lands, which may be efficiently attained without prejudice to the landlord's right to reasonable and adequate rents.

Resolved—That in addition to the great objects we have specified as ancillary to, and promotive of, the great cause of repeal, we shall ever struggle for those objects of just national solicitude.

Firstly—For the extension of the suffrage to be characterised solely by manhood—that is to say, the extension of the suffrage to every male adult who has attained the age of twenty-one years, and who has not been convicted of crime, or affected with mental derangement. This is precisely that which is improperly called “universal suffrage.” It is identical with what is meant by “universal suffrage” with a more accurate name, “manhood suffrage.”

Secondly—For the vote by ballot, without which voting cannot be free from corruption or intimidation.

Thirdly—For shortening the duration of parliament, so as not to exceed in any case three years.

Fourthly—For the equalization of electoral districts.

Fifthly—For the abolition of the absurd property qualification in England and Ireland.

Resolved—That we make this public profession of our principles, as reformers, concomitant with our fixed, unalterable, and never-to-be-relaxed determination for repeal, in order to prevent any species of mistake or delusion respecting our principles and practices.

Not one word has been said of fixity of tenure to-day! But this declaration is fair and honest; it avows that which must be evident, that repeal is, or rather involves a revolution. That the proposition is not to return to any state of things that previously existed in Ireland—not to adopt the constitution of any European state—but to enter on an untried and wild system of democracy. This is fairly admitted to be essential to repeal—so essential that you reject the aid of every man who does not agree with you on these points.

Mr. O'Connell—No! no!

Mr. Butt—Surely while that declaration remains unretracted, as the political creed of your repeal society, it is impossible for any man to join that society who does not concur in those objects ; and this, I repeat, is meeting the question fairly. It is not simply to re-establish an ancient constitution : this is not what you have to do—you have to create a new and untried state ; to form out of the elements of Irish society a system of government—without precedent to guide—or antiquity to sanction—to begin anew in the present century to mould into shape, to harmonize into action, the discordant materials of human society.

But this manifesto reminds me of another point of the honourable and learned gentleman's speech, to which I must advert, and to which this is perhaps the most convenient time to refer. In endeavouring to satisfy the minds of Protestants, as to their safety from an oppression which perhaps I (for very different reasons than a reliance on any constitutional check,) do not fear—the honourable and learned gentleman has told us that the House of Lords is to protect Protestants in this new constitution. Does the honourable and learned gentleman forget his crusade through England, not seven years ago, against the House of Lords ? Does he forget his denunciations of Englishmen, as slaves, if they submitted to the continuance of a House of Lords ? Does he forget “ the pigs with soaped tails ? ” This was then the honourable and learned gentleman's description of the House of Lords—of the English House of Peers. Englishmen were slaves while the House of Peers existed. But now the honourable and learned gentleman is in love with aristocracy—with an aristocracy certainly not superior as a

body to the English. England was trampled on by her House of Lords. This was the doctrine of the honourable and learned gentleman in 1836 ; but now he is prepared to let Ireland be trampled on by a hundred and ten lords. Was the honourable and learned gentleman sincere then, or is he sincere now ? Can any man believe that it would be possible, after repeal, for the Irish peerage to preserve this separate existence ? If they attempted to resist the democracy, three years would not elapse until the balance of the constitution would be settled by an appeal to civil war.

By this manifesto I test the sincerity of the declaration of the honourable and learned gentleman as to the House of Lords. I have still to read one passage—While the repeal association declare that they seek all these measures as ancillary to repeal, they go on to declare that “they must all be consequent immediately on repeal.” I take this honest and candid avowal. If these measures must be immediately consequent on repeal, where is your barrier of the Protestant House of Lords ? If you leave the House of Lords their free and independent place in the legislature, will fixity of tenure ever be enacted ? If the Protestant House of Lords can be a check to invasion of the rights of Protestants, will the Protestant church be abolished as the immediate consequence of repeal ? Will vote by ballot be passed ? will universal suffrage be granted ? Are not every one of the measures contained in this manifesto utterly inconsistent with the existence of an house of lords ? Here is your solemn, your deliberate declaration—passed by your repeal association—that all these revolutionary measures will be immediately consequent on repeal. I leave it to you to

reconcile it with your argument to-day, that the Protestant house of lords would secure the just influence of Protestants in your new state.

I give the honourable and learned gentleman all credit for this manifesto ; it is meeting the question fairly. Repeal is not a restoration of any thing that ever had been before—it cannot be so ; it is absurd to talk of going back to the constitution that existed before the union. Do you propose this? Are you to recall the close boroughs?—the Protestant parliament?—exclusively Protestant?—to send the queen's writ for two members to the borough of Killybegs, or to some place where, perhaps, but the ruin of a few houses now stand? The elements of our ancient constitution are gone for ever ; and again and again I press this upon your calm attention—that to repeal the union is not to go back to any thing that has existed before, it is to create a new state, to fabricate a constitution for Ireland. Where are the elements out of which you are to build up this new fabric? I have shown you that without separation you cannot have a national executive. You have not the elements where you can find an aristocracy, unless you give the power to those whom the honourable and learned gentleman has been always denouncing as the oppressors and enemies of their country. You can have no national executive—no independent existence as a nation. It is admitted that you can have no national church. Where can you find even a house of commons that would represent the popular feeling, and at the same time sympathize with the property of the country? Before six years an independent legislature in Ireland must lead to a collision between the aristocracy and the gentry and the people, and a fierce and wild democracy bear sway in the

country. By the blessings of established order, of regulated liberty, you are now called on to take your stand.

I now assert—I think not without reason, that no person can vote for the resolution of the honourable and learned gentleman opposite, until he is prepared to say that he can settle not only the terms upon which Ireland is to continue united to the imperial crown ; but also, that he is prepared to frame for our country a constitution upon no existing model, but upon principles new and untried—and out of elements incongruous and discordant.

I have said that it is admitted that in your new created nation, you can have no national church. The honourable and learned gentleman has avowed to-day that the destruction of the Protestant establishment must inevitably follow, if it does not precede, the repeal of the union. I have already asked how he reconciles this with his promise of the independence of the Protestant house of lords. But surely he will recollect that the ancient legislature of Ireland was exclusively Protestant—that they, exclusively Protestant, elected by Protestants alone, admitted all classes and creeds to participate in the benefits of the constitution ; yet, so determined were they to preserve the Protestant Church in Ireland, that they made it one of the conditions of the union that it should for ever be preserved ? Do you imagine that if the union had never passed, if the Irish Protestant parliament continued as it was, the Irish church would be curtailed as it is now ? To the destruction of their church I trust the Protestant people of Ireland never will consent. The revenues of the church have been solemnly appropriated to their present purpose—I repeat, the proposal to confiscate these revenues to public purposes, will make the Protestant people look on this ques-

tion as a religious one ; and I do think that the proposal in one breath to avail yourselves of the liberties and rights attained by the Irish Protestant parliament—asserted by the Protestant Volunteers of Ulster, and, at the same time, to take away the revenues of the Protestant church, is, to say the least of it, ungenerous and unfair. I will not, my lord, incidentally discuss the question of the Protestant establishment—a question on which I feel deeply and have much to say ; but this I cannot avoid distinctly saying, that independently of the question as to any particular church, it is my deep and firm conviction, founded on the principles of our common Christianity, that the state is bound to protect and endow a national church. That a state without a national recognition of Him from whom all power is derived, is an impious anomaly ; and that no Christian ought to desire that men should unite in a community without solemnly consecrating their union, and, in the language of Burke, offering up the state itself in solemn dedication on the high altar of universal praise. These principles and sentiments I will venture to say, come down to us with the sanction and authority of the whole ancient Christian church. A national church in Ireland, the honourable and learned gentleman disclaims. But he admits that with the continuance of the union the existence of the Protestant church is inseparably involved.

An argument has been used by the honourable and learned gentleman, which, at this period, I scarcely expected for any practical purpose to be used. He denies the competence of the Irish parliament to pass the act of union. I will not answer him as the Numidian prince is said by Sallust to have replied to his brother by adoption. At the first meeting of the princes after the old king's

death, the adopted son proposed that the acts of the last four years should be declared invalid. Gladly, replied the king's son, for that includes the one that made you a prince. If the act of union be invalid, all the acts of the united parliament must be invalid. Carry the argument to its full length, and all the acts of the parliament of England since the union with Scotland are invalid. But it is clear at least, if this argument be worth any thing, that every act of the imperial parliament professing to bind Ireland is invalid; the emancipation bill is invalid; nay, more, we are all usurpers here. The honourable and learned gentleman has no right to make this motion; the ancient charters of Ireland are undisturbed; the title of every alderman of this city is founded in wrong and usurpation. What right had the imperial parliament, if the validity of the act of union be denied, to abrogate by an act of power all the ancient charters of the kingdom. If this argument be worth any thing, we are all usurpers here; we have no title, in conscience or in truth, to our places here; the members of the old corporation are those who should still occupy them.

I perceive the honourable and learned gentleman smile. I anticipate that he will reply to me, that for all practical purposes of legislation the authority of the imperial parliament must be recognised. Surely it is not competent for him thus to deny and assert, almost with one breath, the validity of the act of union. If the Irish parliament was not competent to transfer their rights, the united parliament had no power, it could have no power, to destroy by its acts charters of Irish towns as ancient as the origin of British rule. It does not become us, who must trace our rights to the act of union, to question its validity.

But the honourable and learned gentleman has quoted Locke's argument with approbation. The delegates of constituencies have no right to transfer the power of their constituencies. If this be true, what are we to say to the reform bill? What right had the representatives of boroughs in schedule A to transfer to others the rights of their constituents? Yet the honourable and learned gentleman boasts of having, by his own exertions, contributed to pass that measure, which, if his present principles be true, was an outrageous violation of right. Is this denial of the competence of parliament now, after an acquiescence of forty-three years, put forward with a serious or practical view? Is Mr. Plunkett's or Mr. Saurin's authority put forward with a practical view? That authority means that the Irish people should repeal the union by force—this is the plain English of the eloquent sentences that have been quoted. I ask, again, is the honourable and learned gentleman prepared to act on this? If not, for what purpose cite these words?

I must now beg the attention of the assembly to that part of the honourable and learned gentleman's speech in which he complained of the consolidation of the exchequer of the countries. On this subject he left something to be supplied by Mr. Staunton. I regret that I had not the advantage of hearing that gentleman, because I cannot understand from him (Mr. O'Connell) whether he complains of a violation of the act of union, or of a hardship to Ireland in the terms of the union. These are obviously very different things; but either case can be met by a simple statement of the facts. The articles of union provided that for twenty years the exchequers should be separate—that Ireland should contribute two-seventeenths of the

joint expenditure, and pay the interest of her own debt ; and whenever the debt of Ireland and the debt of England should bear the proportion of two-seventeenths, that then the exchequers might be consolidated. After the union, Ireland was found unable to contribute her share of the joint expenditure ; she was forced to borrow money to pay this and the interest of her debt ; and in 1817 the debt of Ireland had, from this cause, increased to two-seventeenths of the English debt. This was the entire case ; if I am misstating it, my friend Mr. Staunton will correct me. It having been provided by the articles of union, that whenever either the English debt diminished, or the Irish debt increased, so that their proportion should be as two to seventeen——

Mr. Staunton—No, no (cries of “order”).

Mr. Butt—I will be extremely obliged by my friend’s corrections, if I am wrong.

Mr. Staunton—These proportions were to be brought about only by the diminution of the English debt.

Mr. Butt—I certainly do not so read the articles of union ; had they been such, they would have been ruinous to Ireland. The stipulation is, whenever the debts by any means bear these proportions—[Mr. Staunton made an observation]—(cries of “order.”) The matter is too complicated to be discussed by a conversation, so that the better way will, perhaps, be for me to make my statement uninterrupted, and if I am wrong, my friend can correct me when he comes to reply. I have certainly stated what appear to me to be the facts of the case. In 1817 the debts had reached this relative proportion. It was then found that Ireland could not contribute two-seventeenths of the expenditure without being burdened ; England,

therefore, relieved her of this obligation. The exchequers were consolidated, and Ireland relieved of taxation, which was thrown on England. You will find that this measure was adopted for the express purpose of relieving Ireland of a burden to which she had bound herself by the act of union; that it was a relief to Ireland. And yet this is now made a grievance to Ireland. If the allegation is, that the act of union has been violated by this arrangement, I utterly deny it; if you say the terms of the union were hard, I answer, that from that hardship Ireland has been by this very measure relieved.

To one of the propositions opened by the honourable and learned gentleman I looked, I confess, with some curiosity. I listened with the greatest anxiety to hear from the honourable gentleman how the union is to be repealed. This is to grapple with one great unanswerable argument against the agitation; but I must say that I do not think this discussion has done any thing towards showing the feasibility of the plan. He has proposed two plans:—One that the Queen should come over to Ireland, and, without the interference of the other branches of the united legislature, issue writs to the different Irish boroughs, and Irish counties, and so convene the Irish parliament; the other, that the united parliament should pass the measure. We were all aware that the latter of these courses was open, but he has not yet explained that which is the only difficulty—how the united parliament will be persuaded to grant a separate legislature. The first measure would be rebellion in the name of the queen. I do not believe that it is seriously put forward as within any possible contingency; we may therefore confine our attention to the second. How this

is to be effected we have not got a hint ; and I must therefore say, that until we get something more tangible, some more practical plan of effecting the repeal, it is idle, it is mischievous, to call on Irishmen to embark in so wild a speculation. Let him point out how he hopes to achieve it, unless by physical force ; and an appeal to physical force he very properly disclaims ; but yet, when he spoke of England's weakness as the hour of our strength, does not this seem like a threat of physical force ? But until the honourable and learned gentleman points out some means more definite, more distinct, and more practical, than the proposal to bring her majesty to Ireland, to call an Irish parliament, in defiance of the act of union ; or the simple statement that the British parliament may, if they please, legally sever the legislatures ; I call on every rational man to pause before he commits himself to this agitation.

I will very briefly occupy the time of the assembly by referring to the arguments drawn from the statistical part of the subject. I do not mean to contend that our country is in as prosperous state, or her people as happy as our great national resources might lead us reasonably to expect. No ! I am not satisfied with the present condition of our country. God forbid that any of us should be so ! I know much to be wanted to elevate the condition of our people. But I believe that of all the causes that have retarded her prosperity, and depressed her improvement, there is not one that would not be aggravated by repeal. I believe that political agitation has more than any other cause prevented the improvement of the country. Our own dissensions have kept us back—but what is the infer-

ence from this? That it is our duty now to abandon agitation that can lead to no practical or real good, and cordially unite in a generous rivalry and co-operation to improve the condition of our people. If this can be obtained, never was there a country that had a fairer starting-post for a course of rapid improvement. I believe that under all our disadvantages Ireland has of late years improved as rapidly as any country upon earth. It only wants a few years of quiet—of freedom from agitation, to ensure her advance in prosperity. That Ireland has been improving, the very returns quoted by the honourable and learned gentleman show. The returns of our consumption of the luxuries of life since the union, exhibit, as he brings them forward, an increase—an increase, it is true, not so rapid as in England; but still an increase, keeping pace with the advance of population. And let me observe upon this, that during a large number of the years to which he has referred, the duty on many of the articles he has selected was paid in England, even on that portion of them intended for Irish consumption. I am confirmed in this statement by my mercantile friends near me. This was especially the case with the article of tea; but even of other articles we have imported much from England, that has previously appeared in the English returns, thus swelling the apparent amount of English consumption, and diminishing that of the Irish.

I do not intend to occupy your time by any long or tedious statistical details, or arguments founded on returns, which, in my conscience, I believe are much less to be depended on than many persons suppose. I will refer to one or two documents of unquestionable

authority, for the purpose of proving—not that Ireland is in as prosperous condition as she ought to be—as she might be, if we all applied to her real and practical improvement, the energies which we have wasted in political dissension—but of proving this—that we have no reason to despair of her prosperity—that there is nothing in the condition, still less in the prospects of the country, which should induce us to imagine it necessary for our interest to resort to the wild and desperate remedy of an agitation for repeal.

We have, my lord, official returns of the trade between Ireland and England, from the union to the year 1825. From these it appears, that from the year 1800 to 1825, the trade between England and Ireland had increased from three millions of imports to seven;—the exports from three and a half to over eight. I will not trouble the assembly by reading the returns for each year, but this is the general result. From 1825 we have no regular official returns of this trade as previously. But from another source we can ascertain the amount of tonnage employed between England and Ireland up to 1837:—

Statement of the number and tonnage of vessels, including their repeated voyages, that entered the ports of Great Britain from Ireland, and that left the ports of Great Britain for Ireland, with cargoes, in each year, from 1801 to 1839:—

Years.	INWARDS.		OUTWARDS.	
	Ships.	Tons.	Ships.	Tons.
1801	5,360	456,026	6,816	582,033
1825	8,922	741,182	10,981	922,355
1837	10,299	1,202,104	16,347	1,585,624

Mr. O'Connell—Is that book Stanley's?

Mr. Butt—No ; I am reading from “Porter’s Progress of the Nation.” Here is the increase up to 1837. The last five years would exhibit a still more extraordinary advance.

My lord, I do say that these facts indicate an enormous, a rapid increase in the productive powers and the energies of Ireland—sufficient in itself to disprove the assertion that we are not progressing in national prosperity—quite sufficient to satisfy any reasonable man that we have every prospect of prosperity before us, if we have but sense and patriotism enough to turn ourselves to objects of practical improvement. I hold in my hand another document of authority, the second report of the railway commission. By this report it appears that in 1825 the imports of Ireland, exclusive of the coasting trade, amounted to 8,596,785*l.*; in 1835, 10,918,459*l.*; showing an increase of one-fourth in those ten years on the imports of the country.

Mr. O’Connell—We imported manufactured goods, and we exported cattle.

Mr. Butt—I have taken here the imports—that is, the amount which we have been able to purchase with our own produce, from other countries—and in whatever we pay for this, the amount we purchase is a fair test of the mass of comfort in the country. It is quite true that Ireland has become an agricultural instead of a manufacturing country. I am quite ready to meet the honourable and learned gentleman upon this. But be this change for good or evil, it was the Irish parliament in 1795 who used their efforts to turn Ireland from a manufacturing into an agricultural country. Within a few years they paid a million and a half of money as bounty on the exportation

of corn, and what was the consequence? Agriculture was of course encouraged, but it was by the Irish parliament the country was first turned from manufacture into agriculture. Another most important change has been taking place, as Ireland had been a grazing country, which above all others gave the least employment. It was turned to tillage. We ought not to complain of this; and it was the Irish parliament who laid the foundation of that change by giving the bounty on corn. I refer to this increase of our imports from 1825 to 1837, years during which there was no change, certainly no diminution, in our manufacturing industry at home, as a decisive proof that our people were, during these years, advancing in comfort; and if we have made this advance, under all the disadvantages of our political and religious dissensions, what progress might we not have made had they been years of tranquillity and peace?

I cannot, I confess, see any grounds for the assertion, that our commercial prosperity has decayed since the union. There can be no better sign of the commercial activity of a country than the number of banks which spring up to meet the demands of commerce. This is a test of which commercial men can well understand the value—a test of commercial activity. I am now carrying my argument no further. Thirty years ago there was very little banking business done in Ireland—comparatively little.

Mr. O'Connell—How many have failed of late years?

Mr. Butt—I am not not aware that any have failed except the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. O'Connell—Very many private banks have failed in various districts of the country. The Agricultural was the only joint-stock bank that failed.

Mr. Butt—Even though that were true, I do not think the number of banks which fail afford a fair test of the prosperity of a country; for banks often fail through their own mismanagement. If the failure of banks prove depression, I could read a terrific history of the failure of private banks before the union. But let us see the number of banks in active and profitable operation through the country—banks whose very existence depends, at all events, upon the existence of commercial transactions. The Bank of Ireland, with branches in all the country—the Provincial Bank, the National Bank, and to meet the demand in Ireland, new banks every day springing up, in which English capital is to be invested. It appears by the report of the select committee on joint-stock banks, that in Ireland there were in circulation in 1833, between the Bank of Ireland and other banks of issue, upwards of five millions; in 1840, as high as six millions. And it is impossible to believe that this feature can exist in a country in which trade and commerce are not advancing.

My lord, I will refer to but one more fact to show that the productive powers of the country are called into progressively increasing action. The internal traffic in Ireland is increasing. The traffic by the Grand Canal appears, by the railway report to which I have already referred, to have increased :—

	The total tonnage carried was:				Amount of Tolls.
In 1822 ..	134,939	..	..	..	£24,866
1837 ..	215,910	..	..	..	40,859

showing an increase of more than one-third. I prefer to wearying you by a multitude of figures, to place strongly

before you these few unquestioned and unquestionable facts. I prefer appealing to that which, after all, on such a question is better than any amount of statistical details—your own experience, your own observation of what is going on around you—whether every day is not calling into new action the productive energies of our country, and whether, if we all now unite for the practical improvement of that country, we have any reason to despair of our achieving a rapid advance in civilization and in wealth.

I may be told that distress exists in Ireland: it has always done so. I admit that all this commercial activity may go on, that it does go on while destitution and distress exist with it. This is the great and painful problem of our social progress; it is the problem that has baffled and perplexed the minds of the philanthropist and the economist—the problem which in every country each day's experience is making more important—how it is that wealth can be amassed, and the comforts of human life multiplied to the rich, and merchants acquire the fortunes of princes, while yet amid all this national progress and accumulation of national wealth and increase of national resources, the larger class of the people may be no sharers in the national prosperity. This is the deep and painful problem in the history of modern, social progress, that has excited the attention of every man who has a heart to feel, and intellect to understand the anomalies of our social state. But is this problem confined to Irish society? Is it not to be met with wherever there is to be found the selfishness of man—wherever wealth can, by its power, monopolize the labour of the many to the luxuries of the few? Do you imagine that this problem, which lies far deeper than

the surface of human society, is to be solved by the magic of the simple word "repeal?"

But, while I feel deeply, too deeply to palliate or disguise, the state of too many of our countrymen, there are yet cheering indications that their condition, too, is ameliorating. There can be no better test of the condition of the industrious classes than the deposits in the savings banks: within the last ten years they have increased amazingly; and in 1834 the deposits in Ireland amounted to a million and a half, the average deposit being 27*l*. I have been unable to ascertain the amount of late years, but no one will deny the enormous increase since 1834. Let us look again to the establishment of loan funds throughout the country, which are producing now in many districts immensity of good. In 1836, a central board was established by act of parliament, to superintend the loan funds throughout Ireland. In 1838, all loan funds were compelled to place themselves under its control; so that from 1838 we have a complete record of these institutions. What is the result of the movement now spreading to establish loan funds? By loan funds in connexion with this board, there were circulated in loans of small sums—

1838	..	..	£180,526
1839	..	..	816,473
1840	..	..	1164,046

So that in 1840 we had upwards of one million in circulation among the industrious classes in Ireland, applied in the way of all others the most likely to be useful. I appeal to the experience of every man who has known any thing of the practical working of a loan fund in any

district, if it be possible to overrate the advantages they offer, or the effect they are producing on the condition of the industrious classes. Here is the evidence of their general establishment throughout your country.

Gentlemen will recollect the object with which I have brought forward these facts, not to prove that Ireland is as prosperous as she might be—as she ought to be—as her natural advantages entitle her to be—but to show that our country is improving—that we have no reason to despair—and that if we will now apply the energies which we are called to waste in political agitation to the practical improvement of their country, we have no reason to doubt her prosperity. Least of all, have we reason to feel that we are driven by our condition to the desperate experiment of an agitation for repeal.

The honourable and learned gentleman anticipated the allusion to the case of Scotland. In Scotland the union was more unpopular than ever it was in Ireland: the articles of union were burnt in every town by the mob. The persons who signed them had to fly from the fury of the people. If any man in Scotland now proposed to Scotchmen to repeal it, he would be laughed at. There is not a single argument that could now be used by the honourable and learned gentleman in Ireland, that did not equally apply to Scotland at the period of the union; but now, after the experience of a century and a half, Scotchmen feel that the union with England is a solid advantage to their country, and that their progress in prosperity has exceeded that of England itself. The honourable and learned gentleman anticipated this argument, and by anticipation endeavoured to meet it. How? By quoting a speech of Lord Grey's, in which it was asserted that, for

forty years after the union, Scotland had not improved, but since that period it is admitted her progress has been rapid beyond example. I can very well conceive that the discontent created by a union, the change in the social state produced by its immediate effects, the disturbance in established habits—the withdrawal, for instance, of a parliament from the capital—these are changes which I can well conceive it to require the influence of time to reconcile. But it appears it took fifty years in Scotland to reconcile the people to the union, to turn their discontent into tranquillity, to consolidate the union, and give to Scotland its full advantages. This is the precedent that is cited. But the forty years in Ireland have just passed; the period of probation is gone by—and, after having passed that period, just as we were about, according to the honourable gentleman's precedent and authority, to enjoy the advantages of union, to enter on a career of prosperity, the honourable and learned gentleman calls on us to embark in this wild and dangerous agitation.

But the honourable and learned gentleman has referred to the evidence of destitution in Ireland collected by the Commission of Poor Law Inquiry. Appalling, my lord, and painful to every Christian heart that evidence is. But is the argument of the honourable and learned gentleman this, that no such destitution existed before the union? Need I refer to the accounts given by all travellers in Ireland before 1782? Those descriptions I will not take up the time of the assembly by reading: they all give the same dismal accounts of poverty and wretchedness, of hovels and destitution, far more universal among the peasantry than is now the case. It is impossible that this state of things could have been suddenly changed

after 1782. True! there is not the record of any royal commission to show that destitution then existed to the same extent; but, does this prove that it did not exist? or does it simply prove that it was not inquired into?

But though there are not the records of any royal commission, there are historical documents that show that distress and destitution did exist in the interval from 1782 to 1800. I have near me here extracts from the journals of the Irish House of Commons, recording the presentation of petitions from Dublin, from Cork, and from other parts of Ireland, stating the most pitiable destitution of the citizens—petitions from the silk weavers of the Liberty, representing the decline of their trade and the starvation of their families. I will not, at this hour, weary the assembly by reading these dismal details of the distress and destitution of the operatives of that day. Some of these petitions complained of the decay of the Liberties, of the stoppage of the looms, of the artizans wanting bread, almost in the very language that would be used now. The decay in our silk manufacture has been charged upon the union. In addition to the petitions to which I have referred, there was evidence taken before the Irish house of parliament, that with a protecting duty of fifteen per cent.—a duty enormously enhancing the price of every article of silk, and thus largely taxing the Irish public—it was proved—it was admitted—that even with this immense protection, before the union the Irish silk manufacture was falling to decay. It is an old remark, that, of all trades, those which depend upon the caprice of fashion are the most liable to ruinous fluctuation: and the annals of Spitalfields, the seat of the silk manufacture in London,

attest fluctuations as sudden, and reverses as severe as those which have reduced our Liberties to want.

The evidence of these petitions incontestibly proves that before the union there was the same complaint made of distress that there is now. If, then, we hear, in the history of these times, of nothing but the opulence of Dublin at that period by the residence of the gentry, might it not be because the chariot could roll then in the street as now, and opulence dwell in the stately mansion, and the eye of the observer be dazzled by the splendour of the mansion and the luxury in the street, while nothing was thought or known of the poverty and destitution that, amid all this wealth, hid its misery and wretchedness in the lane and in the garret behind.

For thirty-five years after the union, you had not the evidence of this commission. Will you argue that for these thirty-five years distress did not exist? How little did we know of the poverty of Ireland before that very commission sounded its depths. I well remember that the whole country was startled by that evidence. No one believed that such destitution existed in the country. The only argument then that can be adduced from the absence of such records before the union is, that the Irish parliament did not do what the united parliament did—appoint a commission to inquire into, and lay bare the destitution of the country. Show me the commission to inquire into the distress of the country before the union, and I will admit the argument; until you do so you have no evidence whatever that distress did not exist in the country before the union as fearful as any detailed in the records of that inquiry.

This question, however, must not be argued as if the decision, whether the union shall be repealed or not,

depended on our vote to-day. The question now submitted to you is, not shall the union be repealed—that depends not upon your vote—but shall the country be engaged in an agitation for its repeal, under all the circumstances in which the question is now placed? Nay, more, shall this corporation be committed to the cause? It is possible for you to believe that a repeal of the union would, if practicable, be advantageous, and yet to be of opinion, considering the subject practically, that to agitate the country on such a question would be mischievous. It is possible for you to feel that, as individuals, you would lend your support to the agitation, and yet to think that you ought not to turn this municipal body from its proper functions, to become the instrument of that agitation. I do implore of you, with all the earnestness of which my heart is capable, to weigh well the consequence of your act before you commit this municipal body to this agitation. I am not, I confess, one of those who think that it is forbidden to corporations to express a political opinion; but while I fully recognise our constitutional right to interfere in political questions, I yet believe that there are political subjects to which wise men ought to shrink from committing municipal authority, whatever be the opinions, as individuals, that they may hold. If, indeed, you were called on by the voice of the entire country to express your opinions on the subject of the union—to demand its disturbance after a continuance of forty-three years—this might justify the introduction of a question such as this. Is this the fact? Does the country now call on us to come forward?—or are we asked to lead the forlorn-hope of a desperate agitation?

I refer to the circumstances under which this question now comes before the country. Thirteen years ago the honourable and learned gentleman commenced his repeal agitation ; the hopes of the people were excited, promises of immediate success held out ; and now, after the lapse of thirteen years, is there one man in this room who does not feel that the cause has retrograded ? Thirteen years ago the honourable and learned gentleman was just as vehement as now ; the agitation was far more fierce than it is now. Where has repeal been slumbering for thirteen years ?—where was it at the last election for the city of Dublin, when you used all your efforts to return, as the representative of our city a man pledged to have civil war rather than repeal ? Will any man tell me, who remembers the last five years, that repeal is the question on which the heart of the people is set ? Does the country now call for this measure, I ask you again ? No ! there never was a time when less political excitement existed in Ireland. The country is perfectly satisfied to be at peace ; and unless you disturb it by a forced agitation, the people have now no political grievance to occupy their minds. Nay, more : I believe that in the present state of public feeling the ordinary appliances of agitation are powerless. I believe this motion is now brought forward here because it is felt to be necessary to stimulate by municipal triumphs the dying agitation for repeal. I acquit the honourable and learned gentleman of inflicting on this corporation an injury so grievous as that which must be inflicted by the success of his motion, unless he felt that it was necessary to the cause he believes right : but what must that necessity be ? This, and this only, that, without the artificial stimulus that municipal authority

can bestow upon this question, the honourable and learned gentleman feels that the common sense of the country has extinguished this agitation for ever.

Let us remember, too, the circumstances under which this motion comes forward here. For fifteen months the question was carefully avoided. Its name was never breathed—not a hint was given that ever we would be called on to express an opinion on this subject. I cannot tell what was passing in the breast of the honourable and learned gentleman himself; but this I can say, that during these fifteen months the impression upon the mind of every individual in this assembly, without distinction of party, was, that no such question ever would be brought forward. The movement now made was utterly unexpected. I believe there was not one solitary individual in this assembly who was not startled when the honourable and learned gentleman rose in his place to give his notice. The very suddenness of the resolve shows the real character of this movement. Suddenly, without communicating with any one, after preserving the most exemplary silence for fifteen months—without intimating his intention to any one of his own friends, the honourable and learned gentleman places this notice on the books of the assembly. But this is not all. If the question could endure fifteen months' delay, how is it that once the determination was formed to introduce it here, even a week is an object? The movement must be as rapid as it is sudden. So pressing is the case, that he was compelled to refuse me an adjournment for one short month—an adjournment, asked under circumstances which, I will venture to say, such a request was never refused before. The honourable and learned gen-

tleman selects his own day—he chooses it deliberately and gives us a fortnight's notice ; I was here on that day, but the honourable and learned gentleman inconvenienced me—inconvenienced every member of this assembly by not keeping his engagement—he was not here on the day of his own choice. I did feel that this gave us an irresistible claim to have the adjournment to a day on which the convenience of all would be consulted—that claim has been denied. After waiting fifteen months, this question comes on so suddenly, so pressing, that it cannot brook even the delay of a month. I complain not now of any personal inconvenience to which I have been put. I am quite sure the honourable and learned gentleman would not have forced me to be here to-day, if a necessity did not exist for such despatch. But what was the necessity but this, that, so desperate was the case, the remedy could not be postponed even for one month? The agitation could not exist even for one short month without the impetus of a majority here. I most sincerely credit the honourable and learned gentleman, when he tells me that a sense of duty to the cause of repeal alone has made him force me to be here to-day ; but where was this sense of duty if the national heart is beating with all its pulses for repeal? If the voice of the nation is demanding repeal, what difference could it make if your declaration in its favour was postponed for one month more? I am bound to believe that a necessity for forcing on this motion did exist—that necessity could be only this—that the agitation was dying, and required the prompt, the immediate application of the remedy. I repeat, then, you are not called on to second the voice of the coun-

try—no! you are called on to lead the forlorn-hope of a desperate agitation. Is this the position in which the municipality of the metropolis of Ireland ought to be placed?

But, said the honourable and learned gentleman, this is the very question for the corporation of Dublin—what joy would be spread through Dublin if we could announce to-morrow that three hundred gentlemen, and one hundred and ten lords, were at once about to take up their residence there. I do trust, my lord, that the prosperity of Ireland, after all, rests on a broader basis than the expenditure in its metropolis of any number of aristocrats. Such advantages are vastly overrated. I fully admit that the city of Dublin was injured by the union; but are we to determine a great national question by considerations such as these—by an appeal to our selfish and particular interests? Are we sure that by repealing the union we would restore the lords? How long would a house of lords be suffered to exist?—would the Irish gentry be the members of the Irish House of Commons?

Before you can claim for your cause an argument even as poor as this, derived from the expenditure of a parliament in Dublin, you must answer all the political difficulties I have pointed out. You must show me how, in your new constitution, the aristocracy and gentry of the country are to take their place. No argument can be more fallacious than an appeal to any financial advantages that might follow from repeal. There is not one of these presumed advantages that does not obviously depend upon the solution of the political difficulties of this question: and when you talk to me of bringing back our absentees—of giving

to our capital the expenditure of our aristocracy and gentry, I answer, you must first show that you are prepared to frame for Ireland a constitution in which you can make all the elements of her social system harmonize together, before you can be sure that by repealing the union you will produce these effects.

It must be admitted, that at the time of the union the removal of the court and the parliament from Ireland caused an injury to the city of Dublin; but I believe that the energy of the country has long since repaired even that local injury. I believe that the decline in the value of property in Dublin has been much overrated. House rents have fallen in the city. True; but it is forgotten that new streets and squares have been erected within the city, and that, in fact, a new city has risen up in addition in our suburbs, in the direction of Kingstown and Rathmines. Thirty years ago these tracts of land, now covered with elegant villas, and lines of streets, were waste; and if Kingstown, and all the other outskirts of the city, which have arisen since the union, could be now annihilated, and reverted to the waste which they were in 1800, the rents of the houses in the city would be at least fully as high as before the union, notwithstanding the new squares which had been built within the city itself—now the principal parts of our city. It is not then to the union that we are to impute the decline of property in the old localities of Dublin. The same complaint is raised at the present moment in London, because the merchants and traders—with the growth of civilization—with the increased facility of intercourse—have resorted to the villas and the towns that have arisen round London, just as it has occurred in Dublin. The natural con-

sequence of all this is, that rents are lowered in both cities. Can this be called an evil? It is an addition to the enjoyments of the community, and if property has fallen in value in one locality, it has increased in an immeasurably greater proportion in another. The aggregate value of property in the district that includes the metropolis and its suburbs, is now infinitely greater than it was before the union.

I return to the present position of the question. Once more I earnestly implore of you to weigh well the cost—to reflect seriously on what you do before you commit the municipality of Dublin to the desperate contest for repeal. Remember that on this question you have against you, decidedly, determinedly, the whole power of the British parliament—the British people—the gentry of Ireland, Roman Catholic and Protestant—and a great and powerful portion of her people. Can you find one single member of the House of Lords who would support a petition for repeal? In 1834, you had but a small proportion even of the Irish representatives to vote for it. Few as its supporters were then among the Irish members they are fewer in number now. Gentlemen will, I trust, understand my argument. I do not now put forward these matters as a proof of the impossibility of repeal; I am not now arguing this point. I appeal to you now as members of this corporation, and I do implore of you to weigh these things calmly and seriously, before you commit that municipal body to a contest so circumstanced. Is it right, is it just to your fellow-citizens, to desert the proper duties of your municipal character, and commit this body to the fortunes of such a cause?

I appeal to you as Irishmen, in the name of your country's

peace; I do entreat of gentlemen opposite seriously to reflect on the effects this agitation must produce upon our country. Let you be as sanguine as you may of ultimate success; through how many long years of a convulsive agitation must this country pass—with what injury to her peace, blight on her prosperity, and feuds and dissensions among her people? I do believe in my heart that you never will carry it but by force. (Cries of “no, no.”) What other means have been hinted at but force? or fear which implies, which must imply, that the appeal to force is in the reserve? When the honourable and learned gentleman told you that the hour of England’s weakness might come, was not this an intimation of the means by which alone you could carry it? Weigh well the risk, the fearful risk, of civil war. (Cries of “no.”) You shrink from the contemplation, and well you may. Show me how ever you can carry this without a civil war! But you admit that a long course of fierce agitation must at least intervene. Are you prepared to submit your country to the certain evils of this—the excitement it must produce—the wicked passions it must call into action—for any speculative good that is involved in the dim and distant vision of repeal? Suppose it possible that you should be successful in the end, how must your country be torn in the meantime? How much better would we consult her true interests if we all agreed that the energies which must be wasted in this project, should be applied to her social improvement? What Ireland wants is repose—a rest from the fever of excitement that wastes and consumes her: we want a little interval of peace—an interval in which we might learn to forget our feuds—in which we might learn—not to forget our religious differences.

No; I trust we all feel too deeply for our religion ever to forget or make light of these points of difference—but learn to reconcile with the freedom of social intercourse, with kindly feelings to each other, with calm and serious discussion of the truth, with cordial and generous co-operation for our common country—our deep, our earnest, our solemn differences on the most important subject that can engage the feelings of man.

I confess, my lord, I did believe that there were indications rising in the social intercourse of Irish society that these results were at no distant day to be attained. Will you blast all hopes of these blessed results by dividing our people by this agitation? Is the day of Ireland's dissension never to pass away?

Mr. O'Connell—It is no Catholic or sectarian question.

Mr. Butt—So thought the men who in 1790 began their attempt to separate Ireland from England. They were all for peace—their objects were opposed to any thing sectarian, their struggle was for all, liberality was their motto, conciliation was every thing, union was their very name. The honourable and learned gentleman himself has written how in the terrible result these professions were mocked by the horrors of a religious war. I warn you that when you commence this agitation you know not—I hope you know not—the fearful elements you invoke. Do you believe it possible that a question of this kind, a question involving the national relations between England and Ireland, can be agitated without calling into action the elements of religious discord? Never was hope more vain. The oppressions of Protestant England will be the topic of excitement on the one side. Do you not know that

there will be recrimination? The Protestant will be hallooed against the Catholic, and the Catholic against the Protestant, by every bad recollection that malicious ingenuity can rake up from the perverted history of other times.

Forgive the warmth and excitement with which I speak. I feel deeply. If I know myself, the most earnest wish of my heart is for my country's peace. Did I seek a personal triumph for myself over many who have on former occasions found fault with me, I would rejoice that you should discuss this question in this assembly—that you should carry it. It will justify disregarded remonstrances, and verify unheeded predictions of my own. God forbid that I should triumph in such a result. From the moment I have become a member of this assembly I have laboured in sincerity to disprove my own predictions—to make this assembly the means of good to our country, what it ought to be—not what I prophesied you would be. I am jealous for the honour of our city. I wish to see a corporation in Dublin looked up to and respected. I would wish that when the lord mayor of Dublin appeared at the bar of the House of Commons to exercise the ancient right of this city of declaring there our opinions, he should do so with authority and weight. Can you expect this if the first time he appears there is with a petition such as this? Reserve your authority for better things. Do not squander your influence on such a project as this—a project to which you may lend some little influence, but, in doing so, are sure to deprive yourselves of immeasurably more.

But, speaking of the rebellion of 1798, there is one topic in the address of the honourable and learned

gentleman opposite to which I ought not to forget to advert. The honourable and learned gentleman has stated that the government had connived at the progress of the rebellion of 1798 to enable them to pass the union. The charge had been made before—made by the honourable and learned gentleman himself: it was formerly made to this extent, that they had fomented the rebellion; it is now, that they did not suppress it when they might. I have listened with the deepest attention to the evidence on which the honourable and learned gentleman rested this charge against men of high station; and I do put it to the good feeling, to the candour of this assembly, was ever such a charge preferred on such evidence against the memory of the dead?—a charge so grave as that the ministers were guilty of so monstrous, so unparalleled, so execrable a crime, as that of secretly fomenting, or even as the charge is now modified, conniving at the continuance of a rebellion for any political consideration.

On what evidence is this charge rested? Simply on this fact—that in 1797, in April, the ministry had been informed by a spy of the meeting of nine rebel colonels in the county Down, and did not arrest them. The rebellion was then organized. Can it not be easily conceived, that it was the interest of government not to shut their source of information of the proceedings which they could not stop? Would not the arrest of these few leaders have been the very means not of breaking up, but of forcing the entire conspiracy, then organized throughout Ireland, to the field? I put it to the honourable and learned gentleman himself, has he one particle of evidence on which he can call on any man to believe this charge? Every act of the Irish government refutes the charge of their tampering with the rebellion.

This information was given them in 1797. Many of the rebel leaders had been prosecuted before that time—secret committees had been appointed to investigate the treason. Is it not the fact, that Jackson was arrested so early as 1794? Jackson, whom Wolfe Tone suspected of being a spy, but to whose memory he did full justice when he proved his sincerity by the forfeit of his life. The strongest measures have been adopted—measures deemed by the popular party as unnecessary—the *habeas corpus* act was suspended, and coercion acts enforced, long before the time when it was stated the government received this private intelligence?

But even could it be shown, which it cannot, that the government of Lord Camden had not adopted measures as rigorous as he might—does this prove or justify the charge that has been made? All governments in Ireland have shown an incredulity as to the existence of treasonable conspiracies in the country, in the face of evidence that might have forced conviction on the most sceptical. Their common fault has been in times of danger, to trust too implicitly the apparent tranquillity of the country. Does the honourable and learned gentleman forget that in 1803, the Castle of Dublin was within half an hour of being surprised? that when the secretary received the positive intelligence of a rebellion having broken out, he only laughed at the statement as incredible? that this incredulity was persevered in at the Castle, up to the very moment that the rebels were imbruing their pikes in the blood of the venerable Lord Kilwarden in the very next street? Is it not a fact, that the very volunteers who were hastily summoned to defend her majesty's Castle were not supplied with ammunition? I may, perhaps, appeal to the honourable and learned gentleman's personal recollection.

(Laughter, in which Mr. O'Connell joined, and said he was there himself as one of the Lawyers' Corps. His friend O'Gorman was unwell, and his eldest son was born, but he was able himself to stop up four successive nights on duty.)

Mr. Butt—I hope the honourable and learned gentleman was not one of those who complained of the want of ammunition. But I do put it to the honourable and learned gentleman, is it right, is it fair, on such evidence, on such vague conjecture, to make such charges to the too easily excited passions of our countrymen, as that which he has advanced against the government of 1797? Let it be recollected, that of all the misguided men who then suffered on the scaffold, not one ever made this charge against the government—that it was never brought forward in the Irish parliament. Ought it now, on vague conjecture, to be put forward, when the men whose characters are affected have been years in their grave?

There remains, my lord, one argument, of which I feel I am entitled to avail myself, when called on to engage in an attempt to repeal the union—and which I earnestly press on the calm and practical good sense of gentlemen opposite. The honourable and learned gentleman promises that an Irish parliament would promote the trade, and advance the prosperity of Ireland. Then it must be by measures to be adopted, which we cannot obtain from an imperial legislature; there is no magic in the mere sitting of three hundred men in College-green—and I do think, that a fairer, and more practical course would be, at least in the first instance, to bring forward these measures in the imperial parliament—to watch the interests, and to advocate the advancement of Ireland there. What measure of

practical good for the trade, the manufactures, or the commerce of Ireland, can the honourable and learned gentleman tell us he has attempted, and has failed? Let him take this course—let him show the grievances under which the trade of Ireland is depressed—let him demand the encouragement it requires—but in the name of common sense, let him try this course in the imperial parliament before he demands repeal.

But, says the honourable and learned gentleman, Irishmen are not respected by the English; they have not their just influence! If this be true, whose fault is it? Our own dissensions are the cause. What measure is proposed by one Irishman, that some other Irishman will not be found from faction to mar? I believe there has never yet been a slight put upon Ireland, that our own discords have not caused? We spend our time, we exhaust our energies, in speaking ill of each other, and then we complain that others think ill of us. All parties are perhaps to blame. The honourable and learned gentleman has held up the whole gentry of Ireland as tyrants; her Protestant population—all that deserves the name of a yeomanry in Ireland—as blood-stained exterminators.

Mr. O'Connell—No, no.

Mr. Butt—Has the honourable and learned gentleman never denounced the Orange people, that is, the Protestant population of Ulster, as blood-stained exterminators of the Roman Catholic population? Can these things be put forward without lowering the character of the country? I admit there has been recrimination—you will perhaps say provocation upon our side; but while we thus describe each other, can we wonder, if, as I have said on another occasion, the English people should believe us both? Let us respect

ourselves, and we will soon teach others to respect us too. Our own dissensions cause our want of influence—these same dissensions would make a domestic legislature a curse. I am perfectly satisfied that, if Irishmen were united, there is no real or practical good which we could not obtain from the imperial parliament—disunited in our own parliament, we would be the scorn and contempt of the world.

I believe that better prospects are now opening for our country. I believe it is now in the power of you, of the people, and the party you represent, to give to our country all the blessings of peace—to do so without the sacrifice of one feeling you ought to entertain, without a single concession you ought not to make. Never was there a people, before whom there was opened a more noble course of virtue and patriotism, than is now open to the Roman Catholic people of Ireland. May I address that people as your friend, as your countryman, who must spend my days among you, for evil, or for good? After a contest, in which you have been opposed, perhaps by something that was wrong and selfish, but believe me also, by much that was honourable, and upright, and sincere, you have achieved for yourselves full equality of civic rights. You are proud of your triumph, be it so—whether justly or not, depends on how you use it. You have been opposed, not because Protestants grudged any class a full participation of civil rights, but because they said and thought you would not rest content with these rights, but would employ them to subvert the constitution, overthrow the religion, and break down the institutions of the realm. Prove now how unjust, how ungenerous, were these arguments. If you would bring the blush of generous shame to the cheek

of every man who conscientiously opposed you, give now your country peace—rest satisfied as you are. In your triumph, remember moderation—reject those schemes of wild ambition, which you never can achieve—but, by entertaining which, you must once more distract your country. What have you to seek for? You have achieved emancipation—you have broken down the old corporations—you have gone further; you have trenched on the rights of Protestants—you have swept away ten prelates of our church (“no, no,” from Mr. O’Connell, and cries of “it was Lord Stanley”)—you have taken away one-fourth from the incomes of our clergy. I do not now mention these things by way of reproach. You have established a national system of education, of which Protestants do not approve, but which have been sanctioned by the highest authority of the Roman Catholic church. To this system the funds and support of the state are exclusively given. I say not what I think of these concessions, but they have been made. Right or wrong, these things have been done; and if, after all, you cannot rest content—if you still seek that complete ascendancy for your religion and your party, which is involved in repeal, will you not justify, more than justify every man who resisted your obtaining a full participation of all civic rights? Seek now for ascendancy, and you stamp truth upon the arguments of the most determined of your opponents.

You do not, you cannot believe that now you are oppressed or slighted on account of your religion—you have now the noblest path of virtue and of patriotism before you.

Mr. O’Connell—Hear, hear.

Mr. Butt—It is not virtue, it is not patriotism, now in the

moment when peace seems promised to Ireland, to call into action the dying spirit of party and religious discord. You must do this by agitating repeal. I know full well the weapons that in such a controversy must be employed—it is inevitable. The honourable and learned gentleman has said he has been blamed for writing his history of Ireland. I blame him ! That history should never have been written ! but mark, it was written as the manual of repeal ; and what are its arguments—the necessary arguments it uses ? The oppressions and the persecutions of by-gone days ; and these must be the topics—not the peaceful topics we have discussed this day—that will excite the fierce passions of exasperated parties. What would you have thought of me if, instead of meeting this question as your countryman and your friend ; instead of arguing with yourselves—of appealing to our common interest in our common country, I had appealed to those portions of Irish history that would have excited the passions of the Protestant people ? Do you think I could not have found materials in the past, ay, and in the recent history of Ireland, as exciting on one side, as calculated to stir up the passions as those, which, correct or incorrect, the honourable and learned gentleman has collected on the other ? I have not done so. No ! let the memories of past wrongs be forgotten : away with the evil spirit that would wander among the tombs, to hold communion only with the evil things of other days, and by an infernal necromancy call from the grave the hideous spectres of forgotten crimes to disturb the present generation with the guilt and the passions of the past. But I warn you, books like these cannot be written without provoking retaliation. Others will do what I have avoided to-day.

So sure as this agitation proceeds, so sure as you appeal to the deep passions of the people on one side, will counter appeals be made on the other, and in the exasperation of maddened parties the last hope of Ireland's peace and prosperity be struck down.

There was one insinuation in the honourable gentleman's speech which I confess gave me pain—an insinuation which might just as well have been spared—an insinuation so easy and common-place as to be utterly unworthy both of the question and speaker, the insinuation that in coming forward to maintain that which I feel in my heart to be the cause of my country, I am influenced by a hope of obtaining the favour of the English government.

Mr. O'Connell—I assure you it was not my intention to convey any such insinuation.

Mr. Butt—Then I willingly receive the assurance of the honourable gentleman. I have for my years taken a large, perhaps too large, a part in the politics of my country, I may have taken a wrong, an indiscreet, or a foolish part, but there is no man who can say that I ever took an interested part. Where I have acted I have acted on the dictates of my own heart without reference either to party or personal consideration. What cause have I ever shrunk from, because the power and the influence of any party were opposed to it? From what movement that I believed could benefit my country have I ever stood aloof, from a deference to the prejudices, or a fear of the obloquy of any?

I feel, my lord, that at this late hour I have trespassed unreasonably on the attention of the assembly, I know how little justice I have been able to do to the great cause that I have attempted to sustain. But still I feel confident that

ultimately the reasons and the arguments that have been, however imperfectly advanced, will tell upon the mind of the country. You will have your majority to-day, but there is a calm opinion in the country to which I appeal. Men of your own party will ask you for your plan of repeal, to show that you can have it without revolution or separation; they will ask you for a plain and practical statement of the means by which you will achieve it, and they will shrink from any problematical advantage of a separate legislature, from disturbing the country by the certain evils of civil and religious strife.

I know how specious is the appeal to national independence. But what sacrifice of independence is there in the union of two great countries? and after all, of late years England has been more governed by Ireland than Ireland by England. Have we not the evidence of the honourable and learned gentleman himself, that the reform bill, the measure that impressed the mightiest change upon the imperial destinies, was carried by the Irish members, in opposition to a majority of the English? Have we not seen a ministry kept in office for years, in opposition to the wishes of England, by the votes of the Irish members? And after this you talk of your lost independence. Lost independence! if such an argument were to prevail, what progress ever could have been made in associating men into states? Each of the kingdoms of the English heptarchy might have refused an incorporation with the rest, or might now claim the restoration of its ancient crown; Ireland would still be divided into its petty chieftainries, and to every proposal of consolidation each petty sept would indignantly reply, by talking of a domestic government,

and its chief walk home to poverty, pride, and independence.

I trust, my lord, I have redeemed my pledge of discussing this question as an Irishman. I have not shrunk from meeting the question of repeal, but still I do not ask you to pledge yourselves against it, I only ask you to affirm the proposition that this corporation ought not to be pledged to it. Place your hands upon your hearts and say yes or no, as honest men, to the assertions of this amendment. Can you conscientiously negative them? Is or is not the introduction of this question here calculated to introduce political dissensions? to prevent cordial co-operation between men of different political opinions—that co-operation which it has been the every-day profession of every man in this assembly to desire? Is or is not it calculated to prevent us from usefully discharging our municipal functions for the good of the citizens at large? These are the questions that are put to you by this amendment. Answer them as honest men; prove yourselves worthy of your newly-conferred franchise, by exercising a calm, a fearless, and an independent judgment, superior to any intimidation without these walls—uncontrolled by any influence within. Do this, and I believe—I know—that you will affirm my resolution by a large majority.

I presume that the introduction of the repeal question here will be followed, if it has not been preceded, by the adoption of the repeal test in the wards.—(Hear, hear, from several on the repeal side.)

I thank you for this fair avowal. In future, then, not the respectability—not the wealth—not the business habits—not the station of a citizen, is to qualify

him for our municipal offices—but his adherence to repeal. In your presence, my lord mayor, it is impossible for me to speak fully upon this. I can only suggest to gentlemen opposite how many men among our fellow-citizens, whose high character, station, and fortune, have done honour to this corporation—men agreeing with yourselves in political opinions upon other questions—the adoption of such a test must exclude. If there were no other mischief to follow from the introduction of this question here, this alone would justify our protest; it must be followed by the adoption in your elections of a repeal test—a test that will exclude from the corporation of Dublin so much of the wealth, the integrity, and the respectability of its citizens—a course which must do more than any thing else could do, to lower the character, weaken the influence, and destroy the usefulness of this body, and stamp upon us a character of intolerant exclusiveness—by creating an exclusion more unreasonable far than any which, in the old corporations, you have been for years accustomed to denounce.

For all these reasons I ask you—not to express any opinion on the agitation for repeal—my amendment leaves you perfectly free outside these walls to support that agitation to-morrow, if you please; but I do ask you to vote that the introduction of that agitation in this assembly be indefinitely postponed.

I have already placed my amendment, my lord mayor, in your lordship's hands, and nothing remains for me but to thank the assembly for the kindness and attention with which you have heard me—a kindness for which I feel deeply grateful. You have borne with me, perhaps

in opposition to your prejudices ; and while I have told you plain and home truths. May I venture to say, that in one respect, at least, I have not shown myself undeserving of that attention. I trust I have proved that on this, and every other question, I am willing to meet every one of my countrymen as a friend.

THE END.

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